



August 21, 2023

SUMMARY OF BILL: Expands the definition for a school resource officer (SRO) to include a retired law enforcement officer who is retired from a federal, state, or local law enforcement agency, or an honorably discharged veteran of the United States armed forces, who has been assigned to a public school by the director of schools or by the director of the public charter school. Authorizes local education agencies (LEAs) and public charter schools to employ an SRO to provide security on school premises.

Requires each local board of education and public charter school governing body that intends to employ a retired law enforcement officer or an honorably discharged veteran as an SRO to develop certain policies. Expands the list of individuals authorized to possess and carry a firearm on school grounds to include a retired police officer or an honorably discharged veteran employed as an SRO at a school. Establishes training requirements and requires the cost of the training, firearm, and ammunition to be at the expense of the person seeking authorization and not the LEA or public charter school. Limits certain authorities of the newly created SRO that are reserved for active law enforcement officers only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Other Fiscal Impact – To the extent that a school chooses to employ a retired law enforcement officer or an honorably discharged veteran as an SRO, a permissive increase in local expenditures of approximately \$73,200 per SRO may occur. However, due to multiple unknown variables, a precise fiscal impact cannot be reasonably determined.

Assumptions:

- The proposed legislation would require the Department of Education (DOE), the Department of Safety (DOS), and the Departments of Commerce and Insurance (DCI) to revise and update training materials and planning guidance associated with the previous definitions of an SRO; additionally, the Tennessee Law Enforcement Training Academy (TLETA) may be required to change admission policies and training standards.
- DOE, DOS, DCI, and TLETA will be able comply with the proposed legislation within existing resources and during the normal course of business; therefore, any fiscal impact to state government is estimated to be not significant.

- The Appropriations Act for FY23-24 allocated in Public Chapter 418 of 2023 \$140,000,000 in recurring funding to establish an SRO Grant Fund to place a trained, armed security guard at every public school.
- The Statewide SRO Program Grant provides funding to local law enforcement entities to place one full-time SRO in each Kindergarten through 12 public school and public charter school in Tennessee. Local law enforcement agencies are eligible to apply for funding not to exceed \$75,000 per year, per SRO.
- As part of the application process for grant funding, the memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the SRO Program Grant serves as an agreement between a local law enforcement entity and the local education agency (LEA) or public charter school and sets forth planning and funding obligations related to the placement of an SRO in a school.
- The proposed legislation authorizes LEAs and public charter schools to directly employ a retired law enforcement officer or an honorably discharged veteran as an SRO in a school. Because eligibility to receive an SRO grant requires an MOU between a local law enforcement agency and an LEA or public charter school, and that the assigned SRO be a commissioned officer, schools would not be eligible to receive the grant under the proposed legislation.
- There are approximately 1,837 schools in this state and the average cost of an SRO is estimated to be \$73,150.
- Based on the 2022 Safe Schools Report, there are 1,301 schools with existing SROs.
- If a school chooses to employ a retired law enforcement officer or an honorably discharged veteran as an SRO, a permissive increase in local expenditures may occur. However, due to multiple unknown variables, a precise fiscal impact cannot be reasonably determined.

CERTIFICATION:

The information contained herein is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.



Krista Lee Carsner, Executive Director

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